

REMARKS

Claims 1-8 and 15-24 are currently pending, with claim 1 and 23 being independent. Claim 1 has been amended, claim 23 is new, and claims 9-14 have been cancelled. Support for the amendments can be found at least at paragraphs 0027 through 0030 of the specification, as originally filed. No new matter has been introduced.

Interview Summary

Applicants thank the Examiner for the courtesy of the interview conducted November 13, 2009 by applicants' undersigned representative. During the interview, various differences between the pending claims and the cited references were discussed, including those regarding the features of cancelled claims 9-14, which are now recited in claim 1. Additionally, the unavailability of United States Patent Number 7,496,943 ("Goldberg") as a prior art reference was discussed. No agreement was reached with respect to the claims.

Claim Rejections

Claims 1-15 and 19-22 were rejected as being unpatentable over United States Patent Number 5,812,769 ("Graber") in view of Goldberg. Claims 16-18 were rejected as being unpatentable over Graber and Goldberg in view of United States Patent Number 5,937,162 ("Funk"). Reconsideration and withdrawal of these rejections are requested in view of the amendments to the claims and the following remarks.

Graber and Goldberg fail to disclose or suggest "calculating, if the selection criteria associated with more than one advertisement are satisfied, a satisfaction index for each advertisement" where "wherein the satisfaction index for an advertisement is at least one of: directly proportional to the number of times the advertisement has been sent to a user node and the total amount of time over which the advertisement is permitted to be sent to a user node, and inversely proportional to the amount of time expired since the advertisement was first permitted

to be sent to a user node and inversely proportional to the maximum number of times the advertisement is permitted to be sent to a user node," as now recited in claim 1. With regard to these features, the office action acknowledged that Graber fails to disclose calculating a satisfaction index, and relied on Fig. 3 and element 182 of Fig. 11A of Goldberg as disclosing this feature. *See* pages 3-4 of the office action. However, Fig. 3 does not include any disclosure regarding advertisement selection, and Goldberg does not include a reference number 182 or a Fig. 11A.

Moreover, with regard to advertisement selection, Goldberg discloses that advertisements are selected for presentation to users based on a demographic profile of the user. *See*, for example, cols. 21-22 in which Goldberg discloses that advertisements are distributed based on matching attributes 8.1 to 8.11. Goldberg does not include any disclosure of selecting advertisements based on a satisfaction index, as now recited in independent claim 1.

Funk is cited for disclosure of a domain name server query, and does not remedy the deficiencies of Graber and Goldberg with respect to the satisfaction index of claim 1 discussed above. Therefore, the rejections of claims 1-8 and 15-22 should be withdrawn.

Additionally, Goldberg is not available as a prior art. Specifically, the filing date of Goldberg is Feb. 11, 2000, which is after the priority date of this application. Furthermore, none of the parent utility applications of Goldberg was filed before the priority date of this application. Only the filing dates of the provisional applications to which priority is claimed by Goldberg pre-date the filing date of the parent patent of this application. In response to applicants' request, the office provided the attached copy of one of the provisional applications related to Goldberg. The attached copy of the provisional application does not include any of the discussion of advertisement selection feature discussed above. Therefore, Goldberg is not entitled to the filing date of this provisional application for this disclosure regarding advertisement selection. Applicants have not been able to access the other provisional application, and without knowledge of its content, submit that the Goldberg is not entitled to a filing date that pre-dates the filing date of United States Patent number 5,948,061.

For at least this additional reason, the rejections of claims 1-8 and 15-22, each of which relies on Goldberg for disclosure of advertisement selection, should be withdrawn.

All pending claims are believed to be in condition for allowance. Accordingly, issuance of a notice of allowance for all pending claims is requested. Should the Examiner identify any issues that may be addressed in an interview, applicants request that the Examiner contact applicants' undersigned representative.

Payment in the amount of \$130.00 for the requisite fee for a one month extension of time is made on the Electronic Filing System by deposit account authorization. Please apply any other charges or credits to deposit account 06-1050.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: 11 December 2009

/George P. Bonanto/
George P. Bonanto
Reg. No. 59,717

Fish & Richardson P.C.
1425 K Street, N.W.
11th Floor
Washington, DC 20005-3500
Telephone: (202) 783-5070
Facsimile: (202) 783-2331



03/21/97

0230

PATENT

H3

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In Re the Application of:

Group Art Unit:

GOLDBERG et al.

Examiner:

Serial No.: 60/010,361

TRANSMITTAL OF ADDITIONAL FUNDS

Filed: January 19, 1996

Atty. File No.: 3367-2-PROV

For: "METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR
PLAYING BLACKJACK"Assistant Commissioner for Patents
Washington, D.C. 20231

CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS CORRESPONDENCE IS BEING
DEPOSITED WITH THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE AS
FIRST CLASS MAIL IN AN ENVELOPE ADDRESSED TO
ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS, WASHINGTON, DC
20231 ON THIS 12 DAY OF March 1997.

SHERIDAN ROSS P.C.

BY:

Dear Sir:

A copy of the enclosed Notice to File Missing Parts of Provisional Application was received for the Provisional Patent Application referenced above. When the subject Provisional Patent Application was filed, no Small Entity Declaration was included. However, Applicant is, in fact, a small entity and accordingly a \$75 filing fee was enclosed. Applicant requests that he be permitted to submit a Small Entity Declaration to verify his small entity status and to receive a refund of the \$75 submitted herewith. If this is not possible, a telephone call to Applicant's counsel is respectfully requested. Moreover, Applicant notes that the original Provisional Application submittal form provides the Commissioner the authority to charge the additional filing fee to deposit account 19-1970.

350 SC 04/08/97 20010331
1 214 75.00 CK

Respectfully submitted,

SHERIDAN ROSS P.C.

By: 

Joseph E. Kevarik
Registration No. 33,005
1700 Lincoln Street
Suite 3500
Denver, Colorado 80203
(303) 863-9700

Date: 3/18/97

F:\3367\2\Missing.pts



PROVISIONAL APPLICATION COVER SHEET

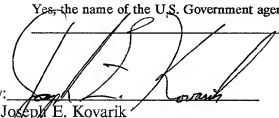
60/010361

This is a ~~request~~ for filing a PROVISIONAL APPLICATION under 37 CFR 1.53(b)(2).

		Docket Number	3367-2-PROV	Type a plus sign (+) inside this box →	+
INVENTOR(s)/APPLICANT(s)					
LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	MIDDLE INITIAL	RESIDENCE (CITY AND EITHER STATE OR FOREIGN COUNTRY)		
GOLDBERG	SHELDON	P.	3360 E. Serene Henderson, NV 89014		
TITLE OF THE INVENTION (180 characters max)					
METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR PLAYING BLACKJACK					
CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESS					
Joseph E. Kovarik, Esq. Sheridan Ross & McIntosh 1700 Lincoln Street, Suite 3500 Denver					
STATE	Colorado	ZIP CODE	80203	COUNTRY	United States of America
ENCLOSED APPLICATION PARTS (check all that apply)					
X	Specification	Number of Pages	46	Small Entity Statement	
X	Drawing(s)	Number of Sheets	9	X	Other (specify) DECLARATION
METHOD OF PAYMENT (check all that apply)					
X	A check or money order is enclosed to cover the Provisional filing fees			PROVISIONAL FILING FEE AMOUNT (\$)	\$75.00
X	The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge filing fee and credit Deposition Account Number:			19-1970	

The invention was made by an agency of the United States Government or under a contract with an agency of the United States Government.

☒ No.☐ Yes, the name of the U.S. Government agency and the Government contract number are: _____

By: 
Joseph E. Kovarik
Registration No. 33,005
1700 Lincoln Street, Suite 3500
Denver, Colorado 80203
(303) 863-9700

Date: 1/19/96

"EXPRESS MAIL" MAILING LABEL NUMBER: 18914611676
DATE OF DEPOSIT: January 19, 1996

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PAPER OR FEE IS BEING DEPOSITED WITH THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE "EXPRESS MAIL POST OFFICE TO ADDRESSEE" SERVICE UNDER 37 CFR 1.10 ON THE DATE INDICATED ABOVE AND IS ADDRESSED TO THE ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20231.

TYPED OR PRINTED NAME: CONSTANCE R. KEIL

SIGNATURE: 



60/010361

File No. 3367-2-PROV

METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR PLAYING BLACKJACK

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

5 The present invention is related to a method and apparatus for automating the playing of blackjack so that it can be played continuously and asynchronously by a potentially large plurality of players substantially without imposing timing constraints on the blackjack games.

10

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The card game of blackjack is a game of chance played between a designated player known as a "dealer" and one or more other players. Basically, each player plays against the dealer in the sense that each player attempts to achieve a collection or hand of cards having a total score for the hand closer to the value 21 than the score of the hand of the dealer. However, if a player's card hand goes over 21, the player may lose any wagers bet on the hand regardless of the value of the card hand of the dealer.

In further detail, blackjack is typically played with one or more standard playing card decks wherein each card has a value. In particular, each of the face cards has the value of 10, and non-face card has a value identical to the numerical value as indicated on the card, except for aces. That is, for aces a value may be assigned of either 1 or 11, depending on which value a player deems most beneficial to his/her hand.

In one conventional method for playing blackjack, at the commencement of a blackjack hand, each player initially

is provided with two cards and the dealer also receives two cards. Typically, one of the dealer's cards is dealt with the value of the card showing whereas the other card is dealt with the value of the card hidden. However, variations on when the dealer receives his/her cards may depend on the blackjack gaming rules where blackjack is being played but, in any case, one of the dealer's cards must be face-up before the players exercise various wagering options beyond an initial ante.

After a player has reviewed his/her cards, the player may request one or more additional cards in an attempt to get: (a) a value for a card hand that will be greater than the hand the dealer will have, and (b) a value for the card hand that is less than or equal to 21. Further, a player may under certain circumstances, as will be described below, simultaneously play more than one hand of cards against the dealer's cards. However, in requesting such additional cards, a player runs the risk of "busting" each hand played wherein the player loses his/her wager(s) on a card hand by adding cards to the hand until a value exceeding 21 occurs. Further note that such busting of a hand occurs regardless of whether or not the dealer has a card hand value of less than or equal to 21.

Note that after each player has ceased to request further cards (i.e., each player "stands" on his cards), the dealer either takes one or more further cards (i.e., "hits") according to predetermined blackjack rules as

established, for example, by the gaming establishment where the blackjack game is being conducted. In general, the dealer must take additional cards if his/her current card count total is less than 17 and the dealer must decline
5 further cards if the dealer's hand has a value of 17 or more. However, there are various rules regarding whether a dealer may stand or hit when the card count total is a "soft 17." That is, one of the dealer's cards is an ace (and therefore may have a value of 1 or 11) and one of the
10 values for the dealer's hand is 17. For example, the dealer may be required to take a hit on a soft 17.

Since a hit(s) taken by the dealer is performed after all players have exercised their wagering options, the final numerical value of the dealer's hand is then compared
15 to the final numerical value of each of the player's hand(s) to determine the winning and losing wagers. Note that if the dealer's hand exceeds the value of 21, then any player that has not busted wins the wagers for their hand(s) regardless of the hand's total value.
20 Alternatively, if the dealer's card hand is less or equal to 21, then it is compared with each of the player's card hand(s) and in each comparison the card hand with the closest total value to 21 without exceeding 21 wins. Of course, ties are possible. In such cases (called a
25 "push"), the player's wager(s) on his/her card hand are returned.

It is typical in blackjack to have at least three additional player options depending on the circumstances of play. A first such option is known as "doubling down" wherein if the player's first two cards have a value within
5 a predetermined range (e.g., 10 or 11), then the player may double his or her wager and once dealt a single additional card, the total of the three card hand becomes the value for the player's hand. Alternatively, another option is that of "splitting pairs" wherein if the player's first two
10 cards are identical with the exception of suit (i.e., a pair), then the pair may be split so that two card hands are created with one card of the pair in each hand. Thus, the player must wager on each of the hands at least the initial wagering or ante amount. Subsequently, a second
15 card and any subsequent successive cards are dealt to each of the separate hands as the player requests and the results of both hands are compared to the dealer's hand, assuming neither the dealer nor either of the player's two hands busts.

20 In a third option, played immediately after each player has been dealt their first two cards and the dealer has been dealt at least a first card, a player may request "insurance" under the circumstances where the dealer's single face-up card is an ace. In this circumstance, the
25 player is betting that the dealer has blackjack (i.e., a card value total of 21). If the dealer does not have blackjack, then the insurance bet is forfeited and the

player plays his/her blackjack hand as if the insurance bet were never made. Note that the player can typically wager an insurance bet of one-half of the amount of his/her initial blackjack wager or ante and if the dealer has
5 blackjack, then the dealer (or the gaming establishment) pays the player double or triple his/her insurance bet.

Further note that options for splitting pairs and doubling down may interact with one another according to certain pre-established gaming establishment rules wherein,
10 for example, a player may double down on one or more of his/her split hands.

Additionally, there are blackjack tournaments having tournament entrants that compete against each other for tournament prizes. In such tournaments each entrant has a
15 fixed initial number of points that can be wagered in a pre-established number of tournament blackjack games to be played. Accordingly, the player having the highest number of points at the end of the tournament wins the tournament. Note that in such tournaments, there may be specific
20 guidelines established at the beginning of the tournament for varying the blackjack gaming rules between tournament games. For example, rules may vary on when a player may split pairs repeatedly during the same blackjack game. Also, double down rules may vary so that, for example,
25 after a splitting of pairs, a player may be allowed to double down on any two cards or, alternatively, an

additional wager of less than the initial wager may be acceptable when a player requests to double down.

However, in all known variations of blackjack, players are only allowed to enter a blackjack game at the completion of a previous game and, further, there is a relatively small number of players that can play blackjack at a dealer's station simultaneously. Accordingly, it is desirable to provide a system for playing blackjack wherein potentially a very larger number of players can play blackjack simultaneously from a single dealer station and wherein players can commence playing blackjack at their own discretion without waiting for a previous blackjack game to complete.

15 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is a blackjack gaming method and apparatus wherein a plurality of blackjack players may play blackjack continuously and asynchronously, and wherein each blackjack game is likely to be unique from all other blackjack games being played concurrently. Furthermore, the present invention is automated so as to not require a manual dealer. Also, the present invention may be played, in one embodiment, in a gaming establishment using low cost blackjack gaming stations at which blackjack players may play blackjack entirely electronically. Furthermore, in another embodiment, the present invention may be used to play blackjack on the Internet. In this later embodiment, a

blackjack game controller for the present invention communicates with blackjack players at Internet client nodes via a web site from which the blackjack game controller is accessed. Thus, blackjack players may play
5 blackjack in the privacy of their own homes and at their leisure since the present invention does not require that a particular tempo of a blackjack game be maintained.

Other features and benefits of the present invention will become apparent from the detailed description with the
10 accompanying figures contained hereinafter.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a blocked diagram of an embodiment of the present invention wherein this embodiment may be used
15 within a blackjack gaming establishment such as a casino;

Fig. 2 provides a representation of the gaming stations 18 of Fig. 1 wherein these gaming stations are used in gaming establishments for playing blackjack;

Fig. 3 is a blocked diagram of an alternative
20 embodiment of the present invention wherein the present invention is used to play blackjack on the Internet;

Figs. 4A-4E represent a flowchart for the processing performed by the blackjack game controller 14 when processing blackjack requests from players in either of the
25 embodiments of Fig. 1 or Fig. 3;

Fig. 5 provides a simple example of the operation of the present invention for playing blackjack wherein four

blackjack games are shown being played asynchronously with the blackjack game controller.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

5 In Fig. 1, a block diagram of a first embodiment of an electronic system 10 for playing blackjack is presented, wherein data flows are represented by solid arrows and control flows are represented by dashed arrows. In particular, the blackjack gaming system 10 includes a
10 blackjack game controller 14 electronically connected to one or more potentially remote gaming stations 18 so that for each gaming station a player may play blackjack. In the blackjack gaming system 10, the blackjack game controller 14 functions substantially as a dealer would in
15 a manually operated blackjack game and each gaming station 18 provides a blackjack player with an electronic representation of a blackjack game wherein it may appear that the player at the gaming station 18 is the only player playing against the dealer (i.e., "head-to-head" against
20 the blackjack game controller 14). Accordingly, each gaming station 18, as will be discussed with reference to Fig. 2 below, includes a display for displaying both the dealer's cards and the player's cards. Each gaming station 18 also includes player interaction capabilities for
25 requesting additional cards, activating various blackjack player options at appropriate times, and potentially increasing various wagers at predetermined phases of a

blackjack game. Further note that each gaming station 18, when in operation, may request a security code be provided by a player for identifying himself/herself or, alternatively, the gaming station may request the player to
5 insert an electronic card (not shown) into the gaming station 18 so that information electronically encoded upon the card is read at the gaming station and transferred to the blackjack controller 14.

Referring now to the internal structure of the
10 blackjack game controller 14, a gaming station interface 22 is provided for interfacing with each of the gaming stations 18. In particular, the gaming station interface 22 buffers data signals between the other components included within the blackjack game controller 14 and the
15 gaming stations 18. For example, the gaming station interface 22 may have speed matching buffers in order to adjust for differences in speed between the blackjack game controller 14 and the gaming stations 18. A blackjack driver 26 exchanges data with the gaming station interface
20 22. The blackjack driver 26 substantially coordinates the operation of the blackjack game controller 14. In particular, the following capabilities are substantially provided by the blackjack driver 26:

- (1.1) identifies each player requesting to play
25 blackjack at one of the gaming stations 18;
- (1.2) creates internal data structures for communication with other modules of the blackjack

game controller 14 regarding each blackjack game being played; in particular, blackjack gaming data objects or records are (re)instantiated with each player request, such data objects providing sufficient information for the blackjack game controller 14 to properly respond to each received player request;

(1.3) determines the output of the blackjack game controller 14 to each of the active gaming stations 18;

(1.4) distributes blackjack gaming data between other modules of the blackjack game controller 14; and

(1.5) provides card representations to gaming stations 18.

15 In performing the above tasks, the blackjack driver 26 communicates with a blackjack player registration and playing status database system 28. The database system 28 maintains in persistent storage information regarding each blackjack player. In particular, the database system 28 maintains:

(2.1) information identifying each player; e.g., a unique player identification code;

(2.2) information regarding, for example, each blackjack player's financial status; in particular, a credit limit and a current amount of funds (either to be paid or received from the player);

- (2.3) for each person registered to play blackjack, information regarding the status or context of any game the player is presently playing; that is, sufficient information is stored so that the
5 blackjack game controller 14 can retrieve this information and continue a blackjack game in response to receiving a player's request;
- (2.4) for each person registered to play blackjack, information regarding any blackjack tournament
10 that the player is playing; in particular, since such a tournament typically requires a tournament player to complete a specified number of blackjack games in a predetermined amount of time and/or to complete a specified number of
15 blackjack games out of a total number of blackjack games, the following types of information maybe stored: (a) information relating to the number of blackjack games completed by the player; (b) information related
20 to the time and/or the number of games remaining in the tournament; and (c) information related to the amount of funds or points in the player's account for the tournament.

The blackjack driver 26 communicates with a wager
25 accounting module 30 wherein the wager accounting module provides the following capabilities:

- (3.1) determines various wagering limit parameters for the next one or more blackjack games to be played (e.g., the wagering limit per game and the total wagering limit per player); and
- 5 (3.2) performs wagering accounting for each player's wins and losses.

Thus, the wager accounting module 30 is instrumental in initializing a new blackjack game in that this module receives and maintains financial information related to

10 each currently active player at a gaming station 18. Thus, the wager accounting module 30 has a communication data channel with the blackjack player registration and playing status database system 28 so that the wager accounting module 30 may retrieve information for determining whether

15 the player has, for example, sufficient financial resources to cover potential wagering losses. Of course, to provide wagering evaluation information to other controller 14 modules, the wager accounting module 30 receives identifying information from each such module requesting an

20 evaluation.

The blackjack driver 26 also communicates with a blackjack player evaluator 34. The blackjack player evaluator 34 receives, from each player (via instantiations of blackjack gaming data objects from the blackjack driver

25 26), all blackjack player requests except the data from each player indicating an amount to be wagered. Thus, the blackjack player evaluator 34:

(4.1) determines each player's options during blackjack games; and

(4.2) responds to player requests for hits or to, for example, split pairs.

5 Thus, the blackjack player evaluator 34 enforces the gaming establishment rules related to player options during a blackjack game. Note, however, that in responding to certain player requests, the blackjack player evaluator 34 communicates with the wager accounting module 30 to confirm
10 that a proper wager accompanies the requested option and that the wager is acceptable to the wager accounting module 30.

The blackjack player evaluator 34 is supplied with data corresponding to blackjack card representations from
15 a card dealer module 38. The card dealer module 38 generates a random sequence of card representations and each card representation is provided to the blackjack player evaluator 34, wherein the blackjack player evaluator responds to each player's valid hit request by outputting
20 the most recent card representation received from the card dealer module 38. That is, each player at a gaming station 18 receives a card representation according to when the player's request is received by the blackjack player evaluator 34.

25 Further, note that the card dealer module 38 also supplies the same card representations as supplied to the blackjack player evaluator 34 to a house blackjack playing

module 42, wherein this latter module plays the dealer's hand in each blackjack game. Thus, the house blackjack playing module 42 enforces the blackjack gaming rules on behalf of the gaming establishment. In particular, this

5 module determines when and how insurance bets can be made related to the dealer's cards. Note, as with the blackjack player evaluator 34, the house blackjack playing module 42 outputs, when required to provide the dealer's hand with another card representation at a gaming station 18, the

10 most recent card representation received from the card dealer module 38. Further note that the house blackjack playing module 42 provides control information to the blackjack driver 26, particularly regarding activation of the blackjack insurance option. This information, in turn,

15 is conveyed to the blackjack player evaluator 34 so that this latter evaluator may activate the insurance option for each player at an active gaming station 18.

A blackjack hand evaluator 46 is also in communication with the blackjack driver 26. The blackjack hand evaluator

20 46 evaluates each player's hand(s) in comparison to the dealer's blackjack hand for determining the win/loss/tie for each player's hand. Thus, the dealer's hand and the one or more hands played by each player at a gaming station 18 is supplied to the blackjack hand evaluator 46.

25 Subsequently, this evaluator outputs win/loss/tie results to the gaming stations 18 via the blackjack driver 26 and the gaming station interface 22. Further, the blackjack

hand evaluator 46 also outputs win/loss/tie results along with the identity of the player playing each hand to the wager accounting module 30 so that wager credits and debits for each player's account may be updated according to the
5 last or most recent blackjack game results.

In Fig. 2, an embodiment of a gaming station 18 is illustrated. The gaming station 18 includes a player input area 204 wherein a player may press touch-sensitive portions of a thin film laminated with blackjack player
10 operations and requests. Immediately above the player input area is a player output display area 208 for displaying blackjack gaming information related to the player. Optionally, each gaming station 18 may include a player identification card reader 216 so that a blackjack
15 player may identify him/herself at a gaming station 18 by swiping a magnetic identification portion of a player identification card (not shown) through the card slot 220 thereby allowing the card reader 216 to transmit the player's encoded identification upon his/her card to the
20 blackjack game controller 14. However, it should be noted that other configurations of the gaming station 18 are also contemplated by the present invention. In particular, gaming station 18 may not have a card reader 216. Instead, a blackjack player may be required to register either
25 manually or automatically at a site remote from the gaming station 18, or, alternatively personal identification numbers may be provided to players for identifying

themselves via the player input area 204 wherein, for example, a numeric digit provided in the lower bottom portion of some of the touch-sensitive areas may be used by the player to input a personal identification number.

5 Further, the arrangement of the touch-sensitive portions of the player input area 204 and the format of the display area 208 (both being discussed in detail below) may have other arrangements and still be within the scope of the present invention.

10 Describing in detail now the touch-sensitive portions of the player input area 204, an activate/enter next game button 220 is provided. This button is used to initially activate the gaming station 18 so that a "request to play" signal is transmitted to the blackjack driver 26. That is,
15 assuming a player activates this button at a gaming station 18, the blackjack driver 26 responds by requesting that the player input his/her identification via, for example, the card reader 216 and/or a personal identification number via the player input area 204. Additionally, note that the
20 button 220 may be pressed at the end of a blackjack game for indicating that the player wishes to play another blackjack game. Note that in one embodiment of the present invention when consecutive games are played by a player, the player need only press the button 220 to commence a new
25 game. That is, the player's identification need not be entered for each consecutive game played (assuming the

button 220 is activated within a predetermined time after the last game has terminated).

The player input area 204 also includes a quit button 224 that a player may press to explicitly indicate the player's desire to terminate any further gaming at the gaming station 18.

Additionally, buttons 228 through 248 provide the player with the capabilities to request the following blackjack gaming requests:

- 10 (5.1) The "HIT" button 228 allows the player to request another card to be dealt to him/her.
- (5.2) The "STND" button 232 allows the player to stand on a current blackjack hand.
- (5.3) The "DBL" button 236 allows the player to double
15 down under appropriate circumstances as determined by the blackjack player evaluator 34.
- (5.4) The "SPLIT" button 240 allows the player to split the player's first two cards into two separate
20 blackjack hands when these first two cards are identical.
- (5.5) The "INS" button 244 allows the player to request insurance under the circumstances where the dealer's single face-up card is an ace.
- (5.6) The "BET" button 248 allows the player to request
25 that a bet or wager be entered during a blackjack game.

Note that subsequent to requesting a bet via the "BET" button 248, the buttons 252 through 264 are activated so that the player may input various betting amounts. In particular, buttons 252 through 264 provide the player with the option to bet \$5.00 (button 252), \$25.00 (button 256), \$100.00 (button 260) and \$500.00 (button 264). Moreover, a sequence of the buttons 252 through 264 may be pressed for obtaining a bet not provided by a single button. For example, to bet \$130.00, the player presses consecutively each of the buttons 252, 256 and 260 (in any order) exactly once.

The player input area 204 also includes various confirm and cancel buttons 268 through 276. The accept button 268 allows the user to accept a last input. For example, it is an aspect in the present embodiment of the invention that after each user input, the input is accepted either by the player explicitly pressing the accept button 268 or by allowing a predetermined amount of time to expire after the last player input. The "CANCEL BET" button 272 allows the user to cancel an immediately preceding bet that was input. However, note that if a time limit is exceeded for placing a bet due to, for example, the player pressing the "CANCEL" button 272, then any minimum bet required will be automatically wagered on the player's behalf by the wager accounting module 30. Further, the "CANCEL LAST" button 276 may be used by the player to cancel the immediately preceding wager of one of the dollar amount

buttons 252 through 264. Thus, if a player intended to bet \$125.00 by pressing first the button 260 followed by the button 256 but instead pressed the button sequence 260 and 264, then the player may press the button 276 for
5 cancelling the \$500.00 bet associated with button 264 and subsequently the player presses the button 256 to obtain the desired bet of \$125.00. Note further that pressing the "CANCEL LAST" button twice in succession also cancels the entire bet.

10 A "SPEED OF PLAY" button 280 may be optionally provided on the player input area 204. This button allows the player to specify to the blackjack driver 26, for example, the predetermined amount of time after a player input to wait before each subsequent input is automatically
15 accepted. In one embodiment of the present invention, the "SPEED OF PLAY" button 280 includes active areas at each end of the button, wherein if the user presses the "slower" end of the button 280, then the predetermined time(s) for automatically accepting a player input is lengthened.
20 Alternatively, if the player presses the "faster" end of the button 280, then the predetermined default acceptance time(s) becomes shorter. However, it is important to note that the tempo of the blackjack game is, using the present invention, no longer as important as in typical blackjack
25 gaming situations. That is, since each blackjack player using the present invention is not playing in sequence with

other players, there is less concern about speedily playing so as not to delay other players.

Lastly, the player input area 204 includes a "HELP" button 284 for allowing the player to request assistance from, for example, the personnel of the gaming establishment providing the gaming station 18.

Referring now to display area 208, the screen display provided here is but one of a number of contemplated screen layouts for the present invention. In particular, the screen layout illustrated in display area 208 is a representative layout for use in playing tournament blackjack. Thus, when other modes of blackjack are played other than tournament blackjack, then it is within the scope of the present invention to modify the fields represented in the display area 208 according to the player needs for the type of blackjack being played. Further, it is important to note that in one embodiment, the display 208 is in color so that, for example, diamonds and hearts are in red and spades and clubs are in black, and various fields of the display area 208 may be highlighted for focusing a player's attention on the portion of the display providing information most relevant to the player's currently permissible options.

Describing now the fields currently presented in display 208, at the top of the display is the house hand area 288: (a) for providing a representation of the cards that have been dealt to the house; (b) for providing a

status of the house hand (i.e. one of: "STUD" for standing, "BUSTED", when the value of the house hand exceeds 21, and "CONTINUING" when the house may take additional hits. That is, this field provides an annotation "house hand:" followed by a representation for at least one card that has been dealt to the house; i.e., an ace of hearts. In the player's hand area 292 of the display area 208, there are five columns providing information related to each blackjack hand the player is currently playing in the blackjack game. The columns provide the following information:

(6.1) The "PLAYER HAND(S)" column provides, in each row of this column, a different blackjack hand that is being played simultaneously by the player in the current blackjack game. Thus, two blackjack hands are presently represented as being played simultaneously by the player on the display area 208. That is, an upper or first hand having a three of spades, king of hearts, and a five of spades, and, a lower or second blackjack hand having a three of clubs and an eight of diamonds. (Note, when a player chooses to double down, card representations in common between two blackjack hands may be displayed in a row between the remaining card representations for both hands. Alternatively, card representations in common between blackjack hands may be duplicated in the

blackjack hands to which the common cards representations apply.)

(6.2) A "STATUS" column for indicating the current status of each blackjack hand the player is playing. That is, for the first or upper hand that the player currently is playing the status is "STND" thereby indicating that the player has elected to stand on this hand. Alternatively, for the second or lower hand a status of "PICK OPTION" is provided thereby indicating that it is the player's turn to pick a blackjack playing option for this hand. Note that there are at least three possible values for the status field of each blackjack hand being played. That is, in addition to the two represented in Fig. 2, a "BUSTED" status value is output for indicating that the value of the related blackjack hand has exceeded 21.

(6.3) The "OPTIONS" column provides, for each blackjack hand being played, an indication of the permissible blackjack plays that the player currently may select from for the related blackjack hand in the same row. Thus, for the first hand illustrated in area 292, there are no options remaining for the player to play related to this hand. However, on the second hand, four permissible player inputs are displayed as

options to the player. That is, the player may stand on the related hand (STND) by pressing button 232, the player may request a hit (HIT) by pressing button 228, the player may double down (DBL) by pressing button 236 and the player may bet an additional wager by pressing button 248 and subsequently putting a bet amount using buttons 252 through 264.

(6.4) The "LAST BET" column displays to the player his/her last bet for each blackjack hand the player is currently playing. In particular, for both the upper and lower hands shown in area 292, the player's last bet was \$50.00.

(6.5) The "TOTAL BET" column displays to the player the total bet the player has wagered on the blackjack hand to which it relates. For example, in Fig. 2, in both the upper and lower player's blackjack hands displayed, the player has bet a total of \$200.00.

Below the player hand area 292 is the player information area 296 wherein additional blackjack gaming information relating to the player is displayed. In particular, labeled line 300 displays the most recent bet amount that the player has requested along with a tag indicating the status (e.g., "ACCEPT/CANCEL") of the most recent bet. Note that the status may be: (a) "ACCEPTED" for explicitly or implicitly indicating the acceptance of

a displayed wager (via the player pressing the accept button 268 or by default due to a time limit expiring); (b) "CANCELLED" for explicitly indicating the cancellation of the last entered wager (via the player pressing either of the cancel buttons 272 or 276); (c) "REJECTED", this status being displayed due to the wager accounting module 30 rejecting the player's most recent bet; and (d) "ACCEPT/CANCEL" for indicating that the present invention is waiting a predetermined amount of time for the player to explicitly accept or cancel the most recent bet. Thus, in the example of line 300 in Fig. 2, the player has indicated a most recent bet of \$30.00 and the blackjack driver 26 has output a status of "ACCEPT/CANCEL" as in (d) above. Further note that the blackjack hand(s) to which this most recent bet applies may be designated in any of a number of ways such as, for example, highlighting the row(s) in the player hand area 292 of the blackjack hand(s) to which the most recent bet of line 300 applies. Alternately, an indicator such as arrows 302 may be used as in Fig. 2 to indicate to the player that the most recent bet is to be applied to both the upper and lower blackjack hand(s).

Additionally, note that line 304 displays the annotation "INSURANCE BET:" together with any insurance amount that has been bet by the player. Accordingly, the dollar amount on line 304 and the notation at the right end of the line pertain, respectively, to the amount that has been bet as insurance, and the status of this bet (i.e.,

one of "ACCEPTED", "CANCELLED", "REJECTED" or "ACCEPT/CANCEL" as in line 300).

5 In line 312 of the player information area 296, the total amount of funds available by the player for betting is displayed. For example, line 312 of Fig. 2 indicates that the player has a total amount for betting of \$1,000.00. Note that the wager accounting module 30 maintains this total amount available for betting and updates it after each blackjack game.

10 The lower three lines 320, 324 and 328 of the player information area 296 provide blackjack player information that is particularly useful when playing in a blackjack tournament. Thus, the information in these three lines may not be displayed when the present invention is used by
15 players not in a tournament. In line 320, two fields are provided for displaying playing time information. The leftmost field, annotated by the label "ELAPSED PLAYING TIME:", displays the total amount of time the player has played blackjack (which in this case is 45 minutes).
20 Alternatively, the rightmost field, annotated by the label "REMAINING PLAYING TIME:", displays the time remaining in the tournament.

In line 324 an identifier for any tournament associated with the present blackjack game is displayed.
25 In line 328, up to two additional fields are provided that are useful in tournament blackjack. The leftmost field having an annotation of "GAMES PLAYED:" displays to

the player the number of blackjack games he/she has completed within a tournament. Note that in some blackjack tournaments each player is required to complete a certain predetermined number of games within a predetermined
5 allotted time period. For example, a blackjack tournament may require each player to play 50 games within a predetermined interval (such as four days). Relatedly, but optionally, in blackjack gaming contexts where the total number of blackjack games in the tournament is meaningful,
10 the rightmost field of line 328, having the annotation "GAME NUMBER:", displays to the player the total number of tournament games that have been completed thus far in the tournament. Accordingly, using at least the leftmost annotated field in line 328 and "REMAINING PLAYING TIME:"
15 annotated field of line 320, the player is able to determine the number of remaining games in the tournament that he/she must play.

Further note that other blackjack game values are contemplated by the present invention. For example, a
20 field providing the number of games remaining that a player must play in the tournament may be added (or substituted for) in addition to the current values in the player information area 296.

In a next display 208 lower area, denoted the rules
25 area 336, blackjack house rules are displayed. In particular, the house rules displayed in area 336 allow variations upon the typical blackjack rules that a player

is likely to assume if not presented with information to the contrary. Note that by providing these additional rules on the display of gaming stations 18, successive blackjack games may be provided with different house
5 blackjack rules thereby creating an increased interest in each game by the players and requiring additional blackjack playing skills from the players. Note that three house rules are provided in the present display area 336. That is, (a) insurance for the present blackjack game pays 3 to
10 1 odds (instead of the typical 2 to 1 odds); (b) the player may double down after splitting only once; and (c) the minimum bet is \$25.00 for the current game.

Lastly, the display 208 includes a player identification area 342 for identifying the player
15 currently playing blackjack at the gaming station 18. The present player area 342, includes a field having the current player's name (e.g., I.R. SMITH). However, other fields identifying the player are also contemplated by the present invention including, for example, a player
20 identification number such as the number that may be encoded upon a player identification card used in conjunction with the card reader 216 for identifying the player.

Fig. 3 presents a second embodiment of the blackjack
25 gaming system of the present invention. In this embodiment, the blackjack game controller 14 is substantially the same as described hereinabove. However,

this controller 14 is now accessible through an Internet web site 308 so that blackjack players at Internet client nodes 318 can play blackjack on the blackjack game controller 14 via the Internet 324 (or more particularly, via the World Wide Web).

Accordingly, describing the web site 308 in more detail, it includes an Internet interface 332 for receiving and supplying communications between the Internet 324 and the remainder of the web site 308. The Internet interface 332, in turn, communicates with World Wide Web server 340: (a) for validating and/or initiating registration of web site users (e.g., blackjack players) at web site 308; and (b) for interpreting Internet requests for routing and/or activating web site 308 modules that can fulfill such requests. Thus, the World Wide Web server 340 may access the database system 28 for determining the registration identity of, for example, a blackjack player. Additionally, upon receiving user registration confirmation regarding an Internet (e.g., World Wide Web) request, the World Wide Web server 340 activates instantiations of modules known as common gateway interface (cgi) scripts, each cgi script 348 instantiation (or, for simplicity, each such instantiation also being referred to as a cgi script 348) being: (a) for interpreting and processing Internet requests according to the semantics of a web site 308 application associated with the cgi script; and (b) for constructing Internet responses from output from the

associated application. Thus, there are one or more common gateway interface modules provided wherein each cgi script 348 (instantiation) invokes the blackjack game controller 14 to process a single Internet blackjack request from an Internet client node 318 where a player is playing blackjack, and subsequently the cgi script 348 constructs an appropriate Internet response from the output received from the blackjack game controller 14.

Since the embodiment of the blackjack game controller 14 of Fig. 3 is substantially identical to that of Fig. 1, a description of its internal structure is not repeated here. However, it is worthwhile to note that the embodiment of Fig. 3 is particularly appropriate when the blackjack game controller 14 executes on a different or remote processor from that of, for instance, the processor performing the CGI script(s) 348. Further, note that if the blackjack game controller 14 executes on the same processor as the other web site 308 modules of Fig. 3, then the communication interface 22 may be unnecessary, and additionally, much of the functionality of the other components of the blackjack game controller 14 may be incorporated into one or more CGI scripts 348. Thus, for example, the blackjack player evaluator 34 functionality may be incorporated into one CGI script 348 while house blackjack playing module 42 functionality may be incorporated into another CGI script.

There are also noteworthy distinctions between the gaming stations 18 of Figs. 1 and 2 and the Internet client nodes 318 of Fig. 3 as well as distinctions in blackjack play interactions. For example, the following distinctions may be provided:

- (7.1) Due to the potentially lengthy delays that occur on the Internet, the embodiment of Fig. 3 does not provide for automatic acceptance of a blackjack play (e.g., acceptance of an input bet or a default to a minimum ante) due to a time period expiring. Thus, the speed of play is determined by the responsiveness of each player and the responsiveness of the Internet.
- (7.2) Players may play blackjack in tournaments against one another on the Internet wherein, for each tournament entered by a player, he/she receives, without cost, a predetermined number of points to use for playing in the tournament. Note that prizes may be awarded to tournament winners as incentive to play in such blackjack tournaments. Further note that the time period to complete a tournament may be substantially more lengthy than the time periods for typical blackjack tournament play. For example, a tournament may extend for 90 days since players can play at their leisure.
- (7.3) The input keys of gaming station 18 of Fig. 1 may be also presented on the display screens of

Internet client nodes 318 wherein the input buttons of gaming station 18 now become active buttons on a blackjack web page generated by the web site 308 and presented to a player at an Internet client node 318. However, note that at least the speed of play key 280 is not necessary, as mentioned in reference to the embodiment of Figs. 1 and 2 since the speed of play is of diminished importance.

5 (7.4) There may be other types of information output to an Internet client node 318 in addition to the information displayed in Fig. 3. In particular, advertising information may be provided with each web site 308 response to a player regarding, for example, blackjack tournament sponsors and prizes.

10 In Figs. 4A-4E, a flowchart is presented of the high level steps performed by the blackjack game controller 14 when processing player requests in either of the 20 embodiments of Figs. 1 or 3. In step 408, the blackjack game controller 14 is initialized so that it may process blackjack player requests and output appropriate responses to each player's request. Subsequently, in step 416, the card dealer module 38 commences to output at regular 25 intervals (e.g. every 0.5 seconds) random card representations to both the blackjack player evaluator 34 and the house blackjack playing module 42. Thus, for as

long as the blackjack game controller 14 is properly responding to blackjack player requests, the card dealer module 38 continuously and regularly outputs card representations. Concomitantly with the actions in step 5 416, the remaining steps of Figs. 4A-4E are performed. Thus, in step 424, the controller 14 waits for a (next) blackjack player input, such inputs being, for example, requests to enter a new blackjack tournament, requests to commence a new blackjack game within a tournament, requests 10 to process a blackjack game play request, a request for information regarding the players account, and a request for help information (such as how to play blackjack).

Upon receiving a blackjack player request, in step 430 the communication interface 22 queues the request and 15 subsequently transmits the request to the blackjack driver 26. In step 436, a determination is made as to whether the players request is related to a current blackjack game and/or current blackjack tournament. If not, then step 448 is encountered wherein an additional determination is made 20 as to whether the player's request is to enter a new blackjack tournament. If so, then in step 454 the blackjack driver 26 determines a blackjack tournament and enters the player into the tournament. Note that in providing this function, the blackjack player 26 25 communicates with the wager accounting module 30 to confirm that the player is eligible to enter a new tournament. Thus, the blackjack driver 26 supplies the wager accounting

module 30 with at least the player's identification and a specification of the tournament in which the player may be entered. Note that the tournament selection may be provided by the player in some embodiments of the present invention. Alternatively, the blackjack driver 26 may select a tournament for the player using tournament information stored in the data base system 28. Assuming that the wager accounting module 30 responds with a confirmation that the player may be entered into the selected tournament, in step 458, the blackjack driver 26 creates a confirmation record identifying the blackjack tournament in which the player is entered. Subsequently, in step 462 the blackjack driver 26 outputs information in the confirmation record to the player at his/her Internet client node 318 (gaming station 18). Thus, in the embodiment of Fig. 3 of the present invention, the output of step 462 (and all subsequent such outputs to a blackjack player) are output from the blackjack driver 26 to the communication interface 22 for queuing until the output can be transmitted to the cgi script 348 that initiated the player request to which this output is a response. Subsequently, the output is transmitted to the World Wide Web server 340 and to the Internet interface 332 for transmitting on the Internet 324 and thereby being routed to the Internet client node 318 where the player is playing blackjack.

Following step 462, in step 466, the blackjack driver 26 enters, into the data base system 28, information indicating the blackjack tournament in which the player has been entered. Note that the information entered here into
5 the data base system 28 is subsequently accessible both by the blackjack driver 26 and the wager accounting module 30 for determining the tournament(s) in which the player has been entered. Following this step, since the player's request has been processed, the flow of control loops back
10 to step 424 to wait for the next player input from a player at an Internet client node 318 or alternatively a gaming station 18.

Returning now to step 448, if the player has not requested to enter a blackjack tournament then step 470 is
15 encountered to process any miscellaneous blackjack player requests not related to a current blackjack game and/or blackjack tournament. For example, a player may request accounting information related to his/her blackjack gaming account. Assuming such requests are processed and
20 responded to in this step, the flow of control again returns to step 424 to wait for a next player input.

Returning now to step 436, if the player request is related to a current blackjack and/or blackjack tournament, then step 476 is encountered wherein the blackjack driver
25 426 uses the player's identification (ID) provided with the request for retrieving any status information from the data base system 28 regarding any current blackjack game and/or

blackjack tournament in which the player may be currently involved. Subsequently, in step 480, a determination is made as to whether the player request is to commence a new blackjack game in a current tournament. If so, then in
5 step 484 the blackjack driver 26 requests confirmation from the wager accounting module 30 that the player can commence with a new blackjack game in the current tournament. That is, the wager accounting module 30 determines whether the player has sufficient tournament credits to continue in the
10 tournament. Following this, in step 488, the blackjack driver 26 determines whether a confirmation has been received from the wager accounting module 30. If no such confirmation is provided, then in step 492, the blackjack driver 26 outputs a message to the player at his/her
15 Internet client node 318 (gaming station 18) indicating that no further blackjack games in the current tournament may be played by the player.

Alternatively, if in step 488 the blackjack driver 26 receives confirmation from the wager accounting module 30,
20 then in step 494 the blackjack driver 26 creates a blackjack game record for fulfilling the player's request. Note that in creating the new blackjack game data record, the blackjack driver 26 communicates with the wager accounting module 30 to both debit the player's account for
25 any initial ante corresponding to commencing the new blackjack game and also to output to the blackjack driver 26 data of this transaction for subsequently outputting to

the player. Following this step, in step 496, the blackjack driver 26 requests the blackjack player evaluator 34 to provide an initial blackjack game configuration for the new blackjack game. Subsequently, in step 500, the

5 blackjack player evaluator 34 responds with an initial blackjack game configuration, wherein this configuration includes the initial card representation for the player's hand (as shown, for example, in area 292 of Fig. 2). Note that this initial card representation is the most recent

10 card representation provided to the blackjack player evaluator 34 by the card dealer module 38. Thus, note that if two player requests to commence a new blackjack game were transmitted to the blackjack driver 26 in rapid succession, then step 500 may be performed for each of the

15 requests before the dealer module 38 outputs a new random card representation to the blackjack player evaluator 34. Consequently, in such a case both players will be presented with an identical initial card representation for the player's hand. Subsequently, in step 504, the blackjack

20 driver 26 stores information regarding the identity and initial configuration of the new blackjack game for the player in the data base system 28. In particular, a blackjack game identifier for the new game is stored and associated with the identity of the blackjack player and

25 the tournament to which the game is associated. Following step 500, in step 504, the blackjack driver 26 stores information regarding the new blackjack game for the player

in the data base system 28. In particular, the following information is stored regarding the initial configuration of the new blackjack game: the player's identity, the identity of the tournament for which the new game corresponds, and identifier identifying the new game, and an initial configuration for the new blackjack game including card representations and any initial required bets. Further, note that throughout the course of each blackjack game played by a player, the blackjack driver 26 and the wager accounting module 30 update information in the data base system 28 as the game configuration changes due to interactions between the player and the blackjack game controller 14. Thus, for a blackjack game underway, each request from a player for continuing the game with a next play, need not provide the entire game configuration to the blackjack game controller 14. Instead, only sufficient information is required in the request for the blackjack driver 26 and/or the wager accounting module 30 to retrieve information related to the blackjack game configuration corresponding to the player's request. Following step 504, in step 508, the blackjack driver 26 outputs an initial blackjack game configuration for the new game to the player at his/her Internet client node 318 (gaming station 18). Subsequently, the flow of control once again returns to step 424 to await a next player input to the controller 14.

Returning now to step 480, if it is determined here that the player request is not to commence a new blackjack game in a current tournament, then step 520 is encountered wherein a determination is made as to whether the player request is related to a play in a currently active
 5 blackjack game. If not, then in step 524 the blackjack game controller 14 processes miscellaneous requests such as, for example, a request for special blackjack rules relating to a current game and/or tournament, the number of
 10 players remaining in the current tournament, the player's ranking in the current tournament, and the prizes for winners of the current tournament. Subsequently, assuming such miscellaneous requests are responded to, in step 524, the flow of control for the present flowchart returns to
 15 424 to await a next player input.

Alternatively, if in step 520 the player request is related to a play in a currently active blackjack game, then in step 528 a further determination is made as to whether the player request is for a new card
 20 representation. If so, then in step 532, a determination is made as to whether the card request is for the house or for the player. If the card request is for the house, then in step 536 the blackjack driver 26 communicates with the house blackjack playing module 42 for obtaining a new
 25 blackjack game configuration for the current blackjack game, wherein the new game configuration includes the most recently output card representation from the card dealer

module 38 as the next card representation in the house hand for the blackjack game from which the current player's request came. Subsequently, in step 542 the house blackjack playing module 42 outputs blackjack game configuration information indicating the new house hand card representation and any player response(s) that the player may exercise in responding to the new blackjack game configuration.

Upon receiving the house blackjack playing module 42 output, in step 546, the blackjack driver 26 determines whether there is a further player response in the present game by invoking one or both of the blackjack player evaluator 34 and the blackjack hand evaluator 46. If there are additional possible player responses, then in step 550 the blackjack driver 26 outputs a blackjack game configuration to the player at his/her Internet client node 318 (gaming station 18) so that the player may exercise one of his/her available game options. Subsequently, having processed the player's request the flow of control again loops back to step 424 to await a next player input. Alternatively, if in step 546 the blackjack driver 26 determines that there are no further possible player responses, then the current blackjack game is complete and the blackjack driver 26 in step 556 activates the blackjack hand evaluator 46 for evaluating the blackjack game hands so that the blackjack hand evaluator can activate the wager accounting module 30 to update the player's account

(according to the results of the blackjack game) in the data base system 28. Following this step, in step 560 the wager accounting module 30 outputs to the blackjack driver 26 updated accounting information to be provided to the player. In step 564, the blackjack driver 26 outputs the results of the blackjack game and the players updated account information to the player. Also, note that the blackjack driver 26 updates the data base system 28 regarding the completion of the present blackjack game as well as any further status information related to the player and the tournament to which the present blackjack game is associated. Subsequently, having processed the player's request, the flow of control again loops back to step 424 to await a next player input.

Alternatively, if in step 532 it is determined that the player's request is for a new card representation for the player, then in step 568 the blackjack driver 26 activates the blackjack player evaluator 34 for obtaining a new blackjack game configuration for the current blackjack game, wherein the new game configuration includes the most recently output card representation from the card dealer module 38 as the next card representation for the player's hand(s). Subsequently, in step 572 the blackjack player evaluator 34 determines the next blackjack play options the player may exercise for the present game and then outputs the new blackjack configuration with these options to the blackjack driver 26. Following this, the

steps 546 and subsequent steps are performed as described above.

Returning now to step 528, if the player request is not for a new card representation then step 576 is encountered wherein the blackjack game controller 14 processes other blackjack player game requests such as requests for additional bets, cancellations of bets, a request to stand on a particular player hand, a request to split a pair of card representations, or a request for insurance. Assuming, that such requests as described above are processed, in step 580 the blackjack driver 26 subsequently outputs a new blackjack game configuration to the player according to the processing performed in step 576. Also, note that the blackjack driver 26 updates the data base system 28 with information relating to the new blackjack game configuration so that it may be retrieved upon a subsequent player request relating to the present game. Following this step, the flow of control for the present flowchart loops back to step 424 to again wait for another player input.

Fig. 5 presents a simple example of the operation of the present invention for playing blackjack wherein four blackjack games are shown being played asynchronously with the blackjack game controller 14. To describe Fig. 5 in detail, note first that the row of numbers 604 across the top of the figure represents a sequence of values of successive card representations output by the card dealer

module 38. That is, in a first time interval a card representation having a value of three is output, in a second time interval a card representation having a value of five is output, in a third time interval a card representation having a value of seven is output and so on across the row. Below row 604 are blackjack game rows 606, wherein each blackjack game row 606 represents a series of events that occur in each blackjack game 610 through 626 over the course of time corresponding to the series of card values 604. In particular, the numerical entries within each blackjack game row 606 correspond to the values of the player and house card hands as additional cards are added to the player and house hands of each blackjack game. For example, referring to blackjack game row 610, assuming this blackjack game commences with the player's hand obtaining the card representation for the leftmost card value of the sequence 604 (i.e. the value three), the player's hand has a corresponding value of three. Subsequently, if the house blackjack playing module 42 is activated for this game to output (i.e. deal) an initial card representation to the house during the second time interval (i.e. the card dealer module 38 has output a card representation of five), then the house hand initially has a value of five. Subsequently, if in the third interval the player for blackjack game 610 provides a request for another card, then the card representation corresponding to the value of seven in sequence 604 is provided to the player and

therefore the player's hand has a total value of ten. Following the incorporation of the seven into the player's hand, this blackjack game is delayed so that the next time interval corresponding to the value of two in sequence 604 is not dealt to either the player or the house in blackjack game 610. Note that it is an important aspect of the present invention that card representations generated by the card dealer module 38 are only incorporated into a particular blackjack game when a request for such a card representation is made during the time the card representation is the most recent output from the card dealer module 38. Thus, one or more card representations output by the card dealer module 38 during a blackjack game may not be used in the game. More precisely, it is typical (although not shown in the example of Fig. 5) that substantially any length or subsequence of consecutive card representations output by the card dealer module 38 may be ignored within a given blackjack game due to time delays occurring in the game. Thus, in some circumstances such delays could be as long as a number of days if the player, for example, did not request another hit during such a time interval.

Continuing now with the remaining plays of blackjack game 610, note that in the fifth time interval the player requests a hit thereby obtaining a card representation having a value of nine and thus obtaining a player's hand value of nineteen. Subsequently, the house takes hits for

the next two consecutive card representations having values eight and ten respectively. Thus, the house hand busted when the value of twenty-three was obtained for the house hand.

- 5 Blackjack game rows 606 for blackjack games 614 through 626 may be interpreted similarly to the description above for blackjack game 610. Note however that each of these games commence at a different time interval in that each game commences with a different card representation
- 10 taken as the first hit for the player's hand. That is, the first card representation dealt in each of the blackjack games 610 through 626 is different and further each of the card representations requested corresponding to values of the sequence 604 is different for each blackjack game.
- 15 Therefore, substantially every blackjack game, even if played concurrently with other blackjack games, will have unique player hands and house hands. Thus, not only can a large number of asynchronous blackjack games be played simultaneously head-to-head with the house, but also there
- 20 may be a greater degree of confidence by the blackjack players that the house is not manipulating card representations in that blackjack players may substantially determine the timing for substantially all hits in a blackjack game (for both the player hand and the house
- 25 hand) and thereby reduce any suspicions that the card representations are being manipulated.

The forgoing discussion of the invention has been presented for purposes of illustration and description. Further, the description is not intended to limit the invention to the form disclosed herein. Consequently, 5 variation and modification commiserate with the above teachings, within the skill and knowledge of the relevant art, are within the scope of the present invention. The embodiment described hereinabove is further intended to explain the best mode presently known of practicing the 10 invention and to enable others skilled in the art to utilize the invention as such, or in other embodiments, and with the various modifications required by their particular application or uses of the invention.

ABSTRACT

The present invention is a blackjack gaming method and apparatus wherein a plurality of blackjack players may play blackjack continuously and asynchronously, and wherein each
5 blackjack game is likely to be unique from all other blackjack games being played concurrently. Furthermore, the present invention is automated so as to not require a manual dealer. Also, the present invention may be played, in one embodiment, in a gaming establishment using low cost
10 blackjack gaming stations at which blackjack players may play blackjack entirely electronically. Furthermore, in another embodiment, the present invention may be used to play blackjack on the Internet. In this later embodiment, a blackjack game controller for the present invention
15 communicates with blackjack players at Internet client nodes via a web site from which the blackjack game controller is accessed. Thus, blackjack players may play blackjack in the privacy of their own homes and at their leisure since the present invention does not require that
20 a particular tempo of a blackjack game be maintained.

RULE 63 (37 CFR 1.63)
DECLARATION FOR PATENT APPLICATION
IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

As a below named inventor, I hereby declare that my residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated below next to my name, and I believe that, I am the original, first and sole inventor of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the one or more inventions disclosed in the patent application entitled "METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR PLAYING BLACKJACK," the specification of which is identified as Attorney File No. 3367-2-PROV and attached hereto.

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above-identified specification, including any claims.

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

1) Inventor's Signature  Date 1/9/96

Inventor's Name (typed): Sheldon F. Goldberg

Citizenship: U.S.A.

Residence: 3360 E. Serena
Henderson, Nevada 89014

Post Office Address*: Same as Residence

*Complete Post Office Address in full if different from Residence, otherwise indicate that the Post Office Address is "Same as Residence."

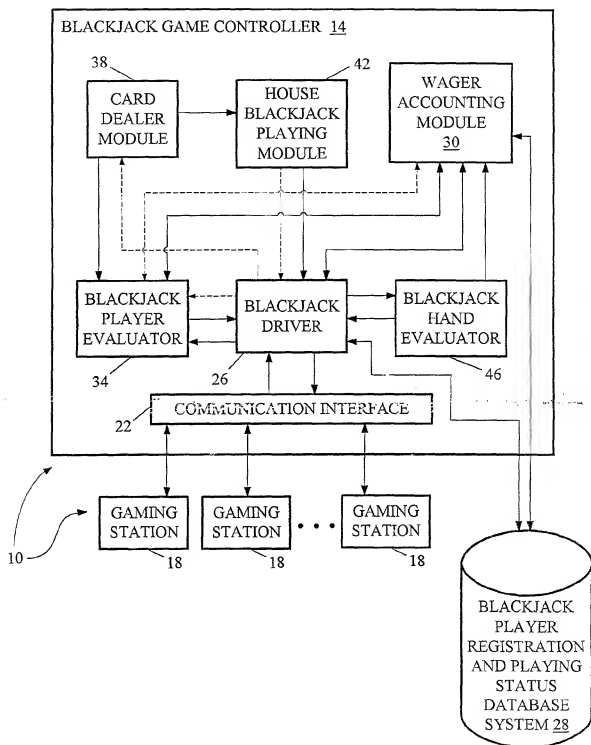


FIG. 1

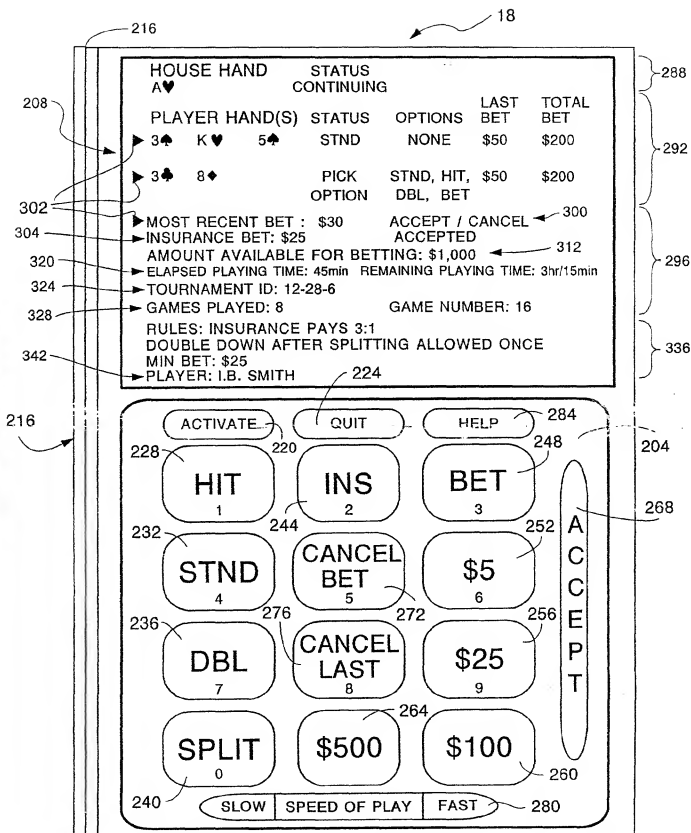


Fig. 2

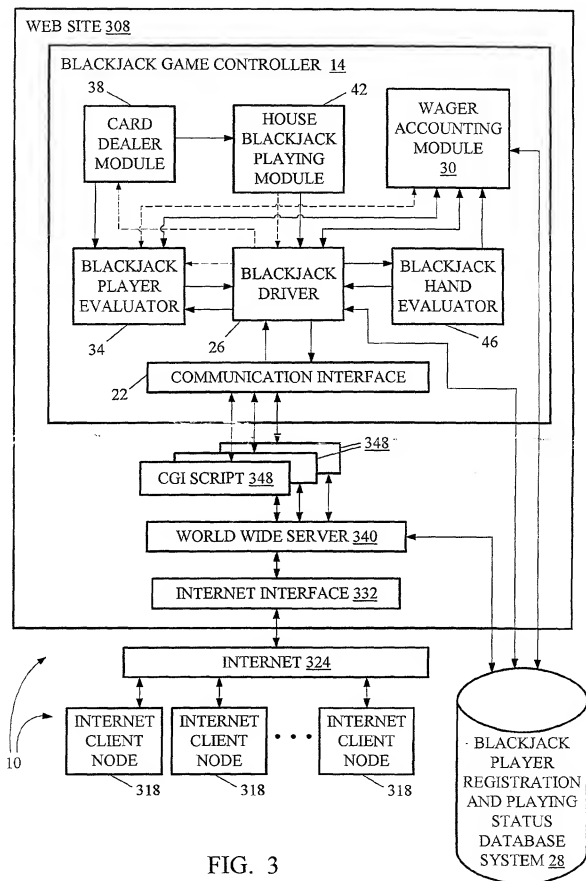
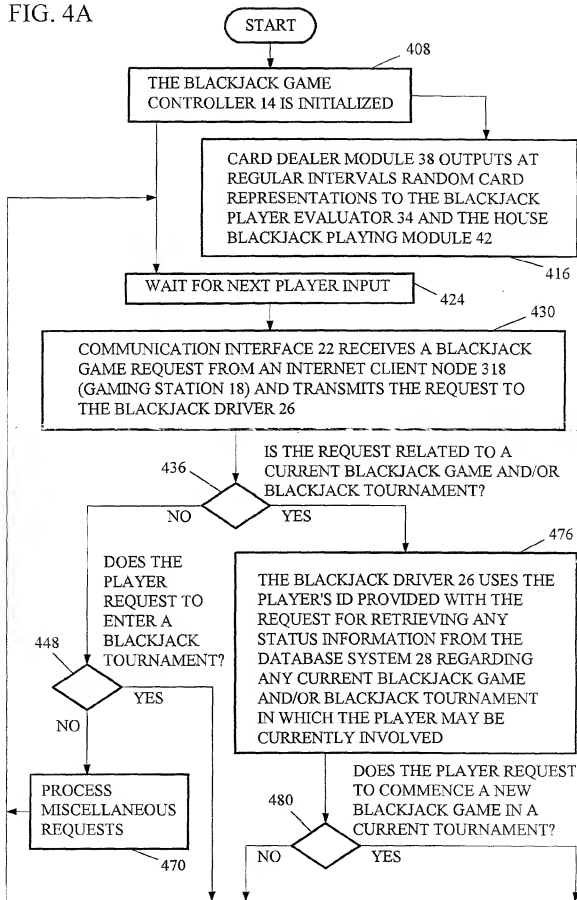


FIG. 3

FIG. 4A



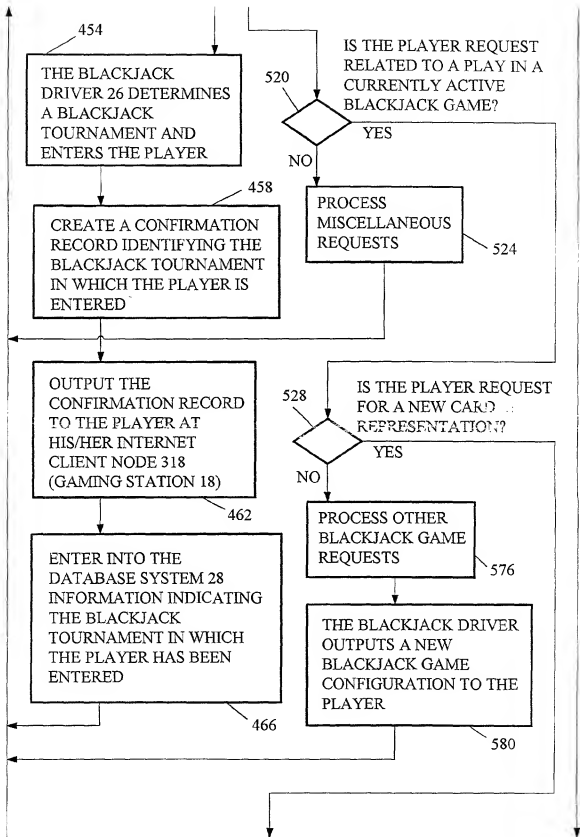


FIG. 4B

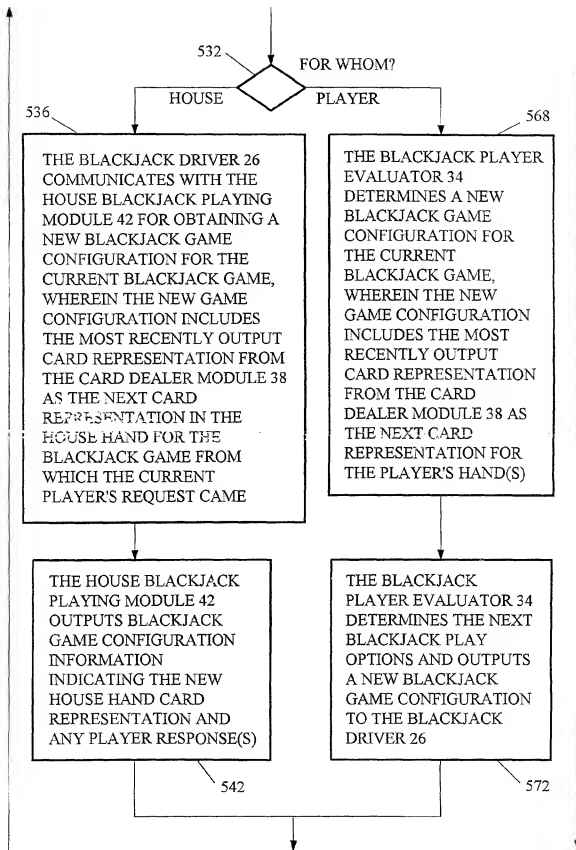


FIG. 4C

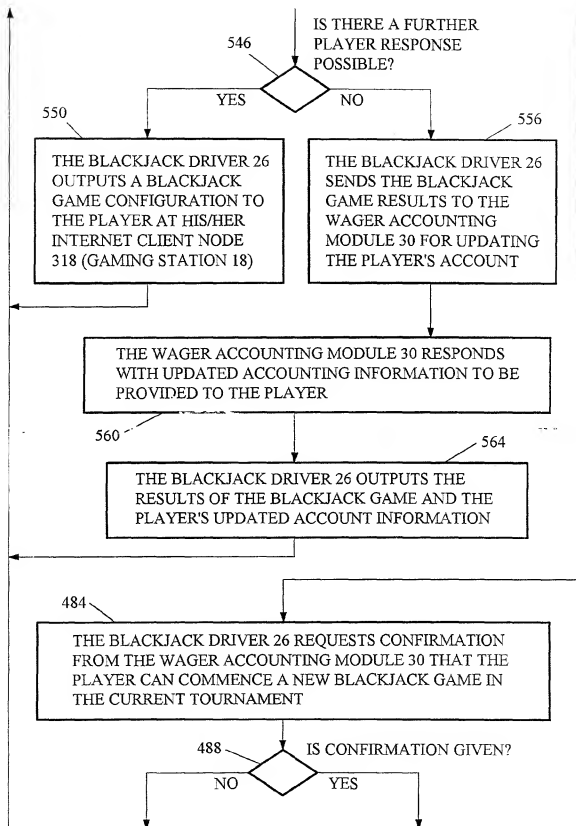


FIG. 4D

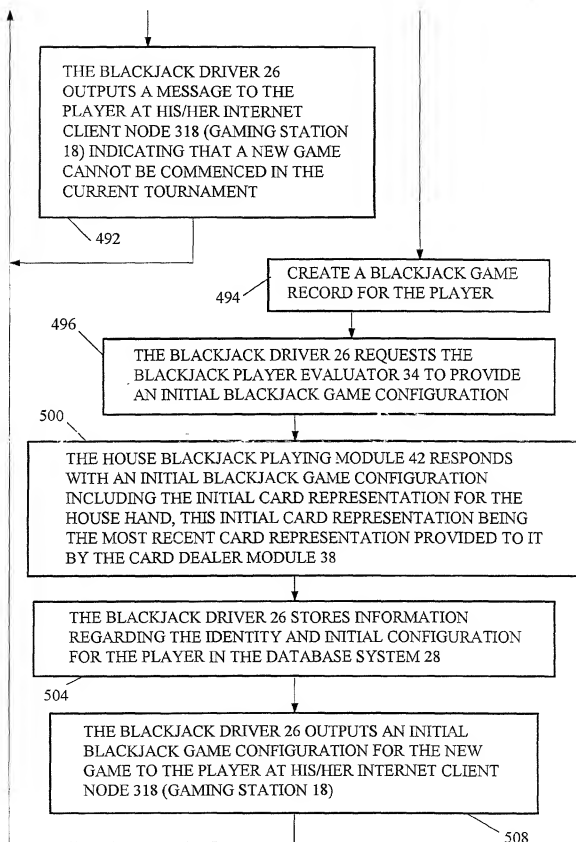


FIG. 4E

VALUES OF CARDS FROM CARD SEQUENCE OUTPUT BY THE CARD DEALER MODULE 38 →		604									
		3	5	7	2	9	8	10	10		
BLACK JACK GAME 610	PLAYER HAND EVALUATION	3		10	—	19					
	HOUSE HAND EVALUATION		5				13	23			
BLACK JACK GAME 614	PLAYER HAND EVALUATION		5			—	13	—	23		
	HOUSE HAND EVALUATION			—	2						
BLACK JACK GAME 620	PLAYER HAND EVALUATION			7		16					
	HOUSE HAND EVALUATION				2		10	20			
BLACK JACK GAME 626	PLAYER HAND EVALUATION					9		19			
	HOUSE HAND EVALUATION						8			18	

606

FIG. 5